

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A floor mat laid in a small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing a small animal, said floor mat being a sheet having a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body;

wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric comprising cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed in a shape of a sheet.

2. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the has a temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.

3. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

4. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

5. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the ~~sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group introduced cellulose is formed in a shape of a sheet~~ cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~A small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing small animals, said small animal rearing cage comprising: a rearing box having a floor and a wall provided at a circumference of the floor; and a floor mat formed with a sheet having a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body~~ The floor mat according to Claim 1 wherein improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl groups per 100 g of dry fabric.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~The small animal rearing cage~~ floor mat according to Claim ~~6~~ 2, wherein the sheet has a ~~temperature holding~~ water absorption and deodorization property ~~to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.~~

8. (Currently Amended) ~~The small animal rearing cage~~ floor mat according to Claim ~~6~~ 2, wherein ~~said floor mat is larger in size than the floor area of said rearing box~~ the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

9. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim ~~2~~ 7, wherein ~~the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property~~ improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl groups per 100 g of dry fabric.

10. (Currently Amended) ~~The floor mat according to Claim 9, wherein the sheet~~ A small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing a small animal, said small animal rearing cage comprising
a rearing box having a floor and a wall provided at a circumference of the floor; and
a floor mat formed with a sheet having a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even

after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric comprising cellulose having ~~wherein~~ carboxyl groups group introduced cellulose chemically bound thereto, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed in the shape of a sheet.

11. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 7 10, wherein the sheet has a water absorption temperature holding property and deodorization property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.

12. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 6 10, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

13. (Currently Amended) The ~~floor-mat~~ small animal rearing cage according to Claim 5, 10 wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.

14. (Currently Amended) The ~~floor-mat~~ small animal rearing cage according to Claim 2, 10 wherein the ~~sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet~~ cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 6 11, wherein the sheet ~~is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group introduced cellulose is formed in a shape of a sheet~~ has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

17. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 7 11, wherein the ~~sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group introduced~~

~~cellulose is formed in a shape of a sheet~~ cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

18. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 16, wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl groups per 100 grams of dry fabric.

19. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 7 10, wherein ~~the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property~~ said floor mat is larger in size than the floor area of said rearing box.

20. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~ A floor mat laid in a small animal rearing cage according to Claim 19 for housing and rearing a small animal, said floor mat being a sheet wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric ~~wherein~~ comprising cellulose having carboxyl groups introduced cellulose groups chemically bound thereto, wherein the cellulose carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed in a shape of a sheet.

21. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The floor mat laid in a small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing small animals, said floor mat being a sheet, according to claim 20 wherein the ~~sheet~~ is formed of an improved cellulose fabric ~~wherein carboxyl group introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet and the improved cellulose fabric~~ contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.

22. (Currently Amended) ~~The floor mat according to Claim 21, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property~~ A small animal rearing cage for housing a small animal, said small animal rearing cage comprising:

a rearing box having a floor and a wall provided at a circumference of the floor; and
a floor mat formed with a sheet, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric comprising cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed in a shape of a sheet.

23. (Currently Amended) A ~~The small animal rearing cage according to claim 22, for housing and rearing small animals, said small animal rearing cage comprising: a rearing box having a floor and a wall provided at a circumference of the floor; and a floor mat formed with a sheet, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet and the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.~~

24. (Currently Amended) ~~A small animal rearing cage~~ The floor mat according to Claim 23 20, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property cellulose having groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

25. (New) A small animal rearing cage according to Claim 22, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

26. (New) A small animal rearing cage according to Claim 10, wherein the sheet water absorption property and deodorization property.